



# BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG)

A provincial network of service, support, and advocacy organizations, family groups, & other community living stakeholders

April 30, 2012

**Re: Update on the Crisis in BC's Community Living Sector**

Dear Mayor and Council,

As you may recall from our previous communications in October and December of last year, the BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG) wrote to your Council about the crisis in BC's community living sector.

Thanks in part to your support, our community living campaign significantly increased public awareness about community living program and service cuts, group home closures, lengthy waitlists, as well as systemic mismanagement at CLBC executive levels. Our campaign received support at all levels of government, including forty Municipalities—yours among them—that issued resolutions or statements calling for urgent provincial government action.

We are writing to update you on the community living crisis, and our group's response to recent actions by the provincial government.

In January, the BC Liberal government acknowledged that Community Living BC had lost its way, announcing a \$40 million increase in funding to the sector and an action plan to respond to the concerns raised. In mid-March, the BC-CLAG sent a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Social Development, praising the funding announcement as a positive first step. At the same time, we reiterated the urgent need to move forward on the recommendations that we developed and released, following broad community consultation, in our April, 2011 report.

Below is a summary of the BC-CLAG's response to the provincial government's recent funding announcement, internal review and audit:

- We welcome the \$18 million annualized **CLBC funding**, while noting that half of these funds were previously announced in September 2011 and earmarked for emergency health and safety needs. Another \$12 million is conditionally allocated to support caseload increases only. We expect this will help alleviate a small portion of the backlog of supports and service requests at CLBC. Community living advocates conservatively estimate that another \$70 million is needed to serve youth transitioning to adult care in the next two years alone, and this does not begin to resolve outstanding needs due to past cuts and waitlists, or to support adults whose aging families can no longer support them.
- The CLBC internal reviews emphasize **employment programs for adults with disabilities**, with \$10 million from the January 2012 funding announcement allocated through the Ministry of Social Development's employment offices. BC-CLAG supports full participation of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life, including employment when possible. However, effective employment programs require individualized, person-centered supports and real work deserves real pay. We caution that this focus on employment must not represent another attempt to cut supports and download responsibility for people with developmental disabilities.
- We are encouraged that the Representative for Children and Youth will now have responsibility for some youths with disabilities while they transition to CLBC services. We maintain the urgent need for an **independent advocate for all adults with developmental disabilities**, with a broad mandate similar to that of the Representative for Children and Youth. Many older CLBC clients have no relatives to help them advocate in crisis situations, and deserve protection like other vulnerable groups.



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The provincial government's reports and action plan do not address other key BC-CLAG concerns and recommendations to address the crisis in our province's community living sector. Our March 2012 letter also urged the provincial government to:

- **Cease CLBC's budget-driven cuts to services and supports**, which have created unreasonable stresses and risks for adults with disabilities and their families, and denied their rights to choice and self-determination.
- **Provide adequate funding for critical support needs**, without which the action plan will not resolve the crisis.
- **Work with community partners to develop provincial legislation setting out the inclusion rights and support entitlements of adults with developmental disabilities** in BC.
- Introduce new oversight measures, particularly for regulation of **home sharing support models**.

Government's failure to engage with community partners or respond to the growing crisis in a timely manner led to a serious erosion of trust, prompting our **calls for a full independent inquiry**. We believe the government's internal review, audit, and funding announcement represent important first steps. But critical issues remain unaddressed and the BC-CLAG maintains that an independent review is still one of the necessary courses of action towards restoring trust and embarking on meaningful reforms.

The BC-CLAG recently received a response from the Minister of Social Development which unfortunately failed to address any of our recommendations—including our request to collaborate on solutions.

The crisis is not over. Families and frontline staff at CLBC report that the new funding has dried up, and the situation facing many families and adults in crisis has not significantly improved. Additional supports and funding were found for some of the most high-profile cases, but many others remain unresolved. There is less clarity and transparency around the waiting lists for CLBC services and supports and the future of group homes remains in doubt.

The BC-CLAG, its partner groups and community supporters remain firmly committed to this campaign until these issues are resolved, and we hope we can count on Council's continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Dyson, Executive Director  
**BC Coalition of People with Disabilities**

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director  
**BC Association for Community Living**

Darryl Walker, President  
**B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union**

Cyndi Gerlach & Dawn Steele, Co-administrators  
**Moms on the Move**

Anita Dadson, President  
**BC Family Net Society**

Alanna Hendren, Executive Director  
**Developmental Disabilities Association**

Michael J. Prince, Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy  
**University of Victoria**

**About BC-CLAG:** The BC Community Living Action Group (BC-CLAG) is a network of self-advocates, families, support staff and agencies who support adults with disabilities. BC-CLAG includes: BC Association for Community Living, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, Moms on the Move, BC FamilyNet, BC Government and Service Employees' Union, Developmental Disabilities Association, Michael Prince (University Victoria), Health Sciences Association of BC, Hospital Employees' Union, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

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